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## NEWS RELEASE

### For Immediate Release

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SIH Community Benefits, SIH Population Health, and the Jackson County Health Department are “putting their money where their mouths are” to reduce gaps in services to some of southern Illinois’ most rural populations. Translated, this means utilizing partnerships to create a better communications’ network at both the newly-created Southern Illinois Food Pantry Network (SIFPN) and the Healthy Southern Illinois Delta Network.

Securing \$1,500 in Telligen Community Initiative (TCI) grant funding, McKendree University partnered with the Illinois Critical Access Hospital Network (ICAHN), Illinois public health departments serving rural populations, the Illinois Public Health Association (IPHA), the Illinois Nurses Foundation (INF), and the Southern Illinois Public Health Consortium (SIPHC) to bring this food pantry capacity-building program to fruition.

“The goal of this project to help reduce health disparities by increasing access to services that address the prevention and management of chronic diseases,” said Michelle McLernon of the Jackson County Health Department. “The plan will enlist SIFPN to support delivery of services and sharing of resources to pantry clients, to develop an online menu of community resources available to support food pantries, to identify and collate a list of existing resources, coordinate service delivery of those resources, provide education and skill-building to better manage health behaviors, provide resources that support population health needs, and facilitate communication between SIFPN and HSIDN.”

The TCI concept plan, derived from a foundational academic/public health partnership partially funded by the INF, allows SIH to partner with an area public health department – in this case, the Jackson County Health Department – to create a dyad. This dyad then works together with a McKendree University MSN Population Health student to create a plan to address a specific health issue for the population it serves.

The McKendree University MSN Population Health student will serve as a member of the HSIDN/SIFPN Partnership, collaborating to develop an adaptable communication mechanism that will facilitate efficient and effective sharing of resources, services, and information across all sectors. The student will also receive guidance from participating agencies and food pantry leaders through attendance at quarterly SIFPN meetings, as well as meetings of HSIDN members actively participating in the food pantry initiative.

SIH and the Jackson County Health Department are not only partnering with this project but also working with St. Joseph Memorial Hospital to spearhead the “Assisting Wound Care Patients with Diabetes to Better Manage Their Condition” program. There are also two other TCI projects that are underway in Illinois. They include the Massac and Hardin Counties Fecal Immunochemical Test (FIT) colorectal screening and the partnership between Marshall Browning Hospital and Perry County Health Department with the program “Building a Healthier Community: Tamaroa.”

*Continued*

"There have been many moving pieces to make sure these population health projects centered on rural and underserved areas happened, with all the right people in our steering task force and key partners in public health departments and critical access hospitals in place and all working in concert towards a common goal," said Dr. Janice Albers, DNP, RN, PHNA-BC, CLC, Project Chairman, McKendree University. "And this is just the beginning...McKendree University will not only be offering 12 \$1,000 scholarships to population health students later this year (application deadline in December), we also plan to write another grant to renew and build on the foundational work from this year. Our focus remains to empower our students to make a difference in rural and underserved areas by learning through experience in conjunction with public health departments and critical access hospitals. By expanding on the current plan, we will be helping more people achieve a better and healthier way of life."

#### **TCI STEERING TASK FORCE COMMITTEE**

The TCI Steering Task Force Committee includes Dr. Albers; Amy Piontek, PhD, MSN, RN, CHES Project Co-Director, Assistant Professor, McKendree University; Glenda Morris Burnett, PhD, MUPP, Illinois Public Health Nurse Leaders, Assistant Professor, Rush University College of Nursing; Angie Charlet, DBA, MHA, RN, Senior Director Quality and Operations, Illinois Critical Access Hospital Network (ICAHN); Stephanie DeMay, Communication and Media Specialist, ICAHN; Sharon Frederking, MSN, RN, SIPHC, and Washington County Health Department Administrator (retired); Miriam Link-Mullison, MS, IPHA Workforce Development Committee; Richelle A. Rennegarbe, PhD, RN, CENP, Graduate Program Director DNP Program Director, Professor, McKendree University; Linda B. Roberts, MSN, RN, IDFPR/ Illinois Nursing Workforce Center/INF, Public Health Nurse Leaders (Steering Organization for the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and Illinois Nurses Foundation funded Illinois Academic/Public Health Partnership); Lesa Schlatman, RN, BSN, MSN Population Health Student, Director of Clinical Transformation, ICAHN; and Kelli Whittington, PhD, RN, CNE, Chair, Division of Nursing, Assistant Professor, McKendree University.

